

SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 1873.

Subject: The Sense of an Ever-Present God.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE.

1873.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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THE SENSE OF AN EVER-PRESENT GOD.

“By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”—Heb. xi. 27.

Of all the great characters that have acted in human affairs there are few more remarkable than Moses. His is among the half-dozen great names of time ; and perhaps not a single other being, purely human, has wrought so deeply and so continuously as he. He was forty years old—which surely is a ripe age—when he attempted the work of liberation for his people. Brought up amidst the blandishments of an oriental court, considered and treated as the son of the proudest monarch on earth, nothing being withheld whether for culture or for luxury, he disdained all these things. In him the sense of country, love for his people, was mightier than every other impulse. They were slaves : he was a prince. They were odious : he was full of honor. They were trodden under foot by royal authority : why should he discrown himself, and disrobe himself, and identify himself with this stricken and despised people ? Yet this he did. He manifested himself to them as their deliverer. But they accepted him not ; they reviled him ; and every step in their path redounded to their disadvantage, and to his discredit. His life came to be in peril, and he fled from the court. So he lost at once the favor of royalty, and all its amenities, and the affection and trust of his people. He betook himself to the wilderness, and became a shepherd ; for forty years he patiently followed the pursuits of a shepherd ; and not until he had reached that age in which men ordinarily lay down their burdens, not until he was eighty years old, did he really begin his life-work. All the rest was patient waiting. *Wait and hope* seems to have been his motto.

At eighty he entered upon his task. I need not rehearse the steps by which his people were delivered from thrall. Under his

auspices they were led into the wilderness, which was made a school where he organized civil government and religious worship ; where he put them for years through a training. During a period equal to the other two which divided his life, on his shoulders came the whole administration of this frivolous, enfeebled, unreasonable, headstrong and servile nation ; and he undertook the gigantic task of leading three millions of people in the wilderness till they should become inured to law and self-government, before they were planted in the promised land. And when at last the time drew near in which they were to be carried across the border, and established in Canaan, he himself was not permitted to go with them.

There is no passage in human experience more sad than that of the death of Moses. His long life had been one of unintermitted toil ; it was the joy and expectation of his whole being to establish his people in the seat of their future power : and yet, at the end of it, all that was permitted him was to stand upon the mountain and look over across the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and behold the hills of the promised land, north and south and west. He was suffered only to gaze upon a land that was to be possessed by his people, and then to fold his eagle-wings and die.

Now, this long life of patience and of enduring expectation, this long life which terminated apparently with grievous disappointment, was sustained, we are told in the Book of Hebrews, by the sense which Moses had of a God present with him, but invisible—a God realized, but not seen.

“He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

In this great life-work which was before him, it seemed, for eighty years, that there was nothing for him to do but to tend flocks. For he had, as I have already stated, set himself loose from the court of Pharaoh, where his function, it appears, had come to an end. He patiently waited, because he had the consciousness of a present God. And when he terminated his pastoral relation to the flocks, he assumed a greater pastoral relation to this vast unorganized, discordant, and enslaved people.

His tasks then became mighty. None know what the cares of a people are who have felt none of these responsibilities. During that administration he issued laws so wise that they have mingled themselves with the laws of every nation on the globe—laws so wise that they had in them germs of natural justice and civil polity which have come down to our day, and which are strong in our commonwealth. And while he was fashioning all these elements, that which maintained him was the silent consciousness, *Thou, Lord God, art with me.*

That same power has not lost its effect. It has been felt in all the ages which have passed since that time. Other men, though their characters may not have been so sublime as his, or so fruitful, have, in their various spheres, and according to the nature of their lives, been enabled to achieve great victories, and to endure great pressure, by the power of the same inspiration. They have "endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

In our day, when the force of observation is so strong, and when the senses have mounted into the judgment seat, and are pronouncing to so great a degree the judgments of truth, the question still more frequently addresses itself to the minds of those who reflect on the subject of God, "Why, if we are to be under the influence of the Divine nature, is there no manifestation of God? Why should God be invisible? Why should there not be, at any rate once in an age, or in a man's lifetime, an exhibition of him? Since it is a matter of such supreme importance that men should believe in God, and feel his presence and power, why is he not disclosed to them? Why should the race have been created incompetent to discern God by the same methods by which they discern other things? We are created to discern facts; we are created with all the faculties necessary to enable us to discern the truths of God's existence, of his royalty, and of his government; and why is there no adaptation in the human mind by which we can see God?" The question is one of subtle difficulties, and it will not stay answered. It drops again and again into doubt. Men are continually asking, "Why is there not a more manifest revelation of God?"

Over against this, without going into a critical or philosophical answer, stands the fact, that from the beginning of the world the human race has had no visible God; and that, from the beginning of the race, the noblest natures among men have "lived as seeing [as if they saw] him who is invisible." In other words, an invisible God has wrought in such a way upon the human mind, that while the great mass of mankind have believed in him, in a sense, the strongest, the deepest, the most luminous natures have been the most intensely directed to the invisible God—or, if I may so say, the conceptional Deity—the Deity that is framed by their thought, and their imagination, and their faith. The most heroic endurances and achievements in this world have been inspired in great moral natures by the realization of an invisible God.

While, then, if you look at it personally and philosophically, it would seem to be something extraordinary that a Being so needful to the very purpose of human life should be so obscure that no man can say, "I have seen him," or, "I have heard him speak," the

necessity of a Divine manifestation is not so great, since in every age of the world the best men, they that have done the best things, are those that have made such a use of an undisclosed God as to rise from the ordinary level of life into heroic moods and to heroic achievements. The faith of an invisible God has done the hardest thing that can be done with the human race ; and that is, to hold it steadfast, year after year, to the high purposes of moral development on one side and self-abnegation on the other, causing it to live by faith and hope, and to unfold steadily a higher character and condition.

If you still press the question, Why should not God accommodate himself to human necessities ? Why should there not be, at least occasionally, a direct disclosure of him, so that all could see him ?—it can be answered only suggestively. No adequate answer can be given to it but this : that the human race are on their way up from the lower and germinal point to a point at which they shall meet God, as it were, on his own level.

Then there is the same difficulty in the revelation of a personal God by sight and by sense to men who learn by sight and by sense, that there is in making known to a child the reality of the being of one who is grown up. A child knows *father* and *mother* ; a child has a vague sense that father and mother are good and kind ; it discriminates one from the other : but a child's knowledge of its father and mother stops infinitely short of that which they think of when they speak of their own being. A child can neither understand your thoughts, nor the delicacy and sweetness and endless flow of your affections, nor your ambitions and aspirations. It is entirely ignorant of that which carves you out inwardly as a civilized, Christian being. That which it can understand is the case, as it were, the outward development, the physical nature that belongs to you ; whereas that which is your reality, your inward self, he cannot understand. There is no power in you to explain it to him, because there is no power in him to perceive it. There is no understanding element in him.

He that makes motions in the air makes no music unless his hands touch the keys of an instrument ; and so he that thrusts thoughts of God where there is no faculty of perception does not interpret him. The light shines into darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. There is not in an undeveloped child's mind that which, when a thought is presented to it, perceives it. It is inherently impossible that there should be perception where the qualities on which it depends are wanting.

There is the Pantheistic scheme, which is only an outward dis-

closure, a physical representation of God. It does not touch the interior. The true interior God cannot be interpreted to the senses. It cannot be brought down to their level. It could not be understood by us, even if it were placed before us—and it *is* placed before us. God walks before us all the time; and yet we see him not. He dwells in our midst; doubtless he is making himself manifest to the spiritual beings that swarm throughout the universe, and is right in our presence; and why do we not discern him? Because he is a spirit, and must be spiritually discerned if discerned at all; and we are carnal, and can understand only the lower forms of knowledge. We are working our way up from sense to sensibility; we are steadily progressing toward an intuitional state; we have in ourselves intimations of disclosive power; and by and by we shall discern these spiritual realities: but the very lowness of our condition, our nascent, half-organized, undeveloped estate, makes it impossible for us to comprehend such things now. I say the idea of a disclosure of God personally to us as a visible form, contradicts the laws of divine existence. If anything is so reduced that we can perceive it with the eye and measure it by the senses, it has ceased to be ineffable spirit, which God is; it has lost that which inheres in the original, and makes the original what it is.

If, then, you ask, "Why is there not a clear and unmistakable disclosure of God to men?" the answer is this: No man can be helped to a comprehension of God except by developing himself, and carrying himself up into those altitudes where he shall at last have discernment, not so much through sensuous reasoning as by moral intuitions. When a man has reached those altitudes, with or without his reason, there will be borne into him the consciousness, "Thou, Lord God, art."

The importance of having this sense of an ever-present God will occupy our thought for the residue of this discourse.

As a matter of philosophic speculation, as a matter pertinent to the formation of religious states, a discussion of the reasons why God is not visible, why he hides himself in his grand invisibility, is not without its uses; but the main benefit of a consideration of this subject should be derived from pressing upon you the necessity, more than ever now, of maintaining a consciousness—not a comprehension of God, or invisible Spirit—a consciousness that there is an intelligent God who knows all our fears; by whom we are read as an open book; before whom we are naked; from whom there can be nothing hidden; who sees through all disguises; who knows the truth afar off, absolutely as well as relatively. We dwell in the presence of such a Being, who fills the spheres; who is the Father

of providence; who is the source and fountain of all government; from whose will flows down all the long tide of future bliss; who comprehends all things; in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

In the first place, it is extremely important, at the present time, in these days of philosophical investigation and of natural science, not to stop the thoughts of men upon physical or second causes. It is transcendently important that men should go beyond those causes, and, if they have not a physical conception of God, still have a practical feeling that high above nature is the Creator; and that, though they may not be able to limn his portrait, nor give proportion to all his attributes, they may yet believe that he is a God of righteousness, and truth, and justice, and will, and power, and infinite wisdom, and ever-presence, and control, and love; so that the whole scheme of the world and of the universe works toward the eradication of evil and the triumph of good.

There may have been—there was, undoubtedly, in early days—a disproportion the other way. Men did not enough consider second causes, or those great laws which are being disclosed now, and which are becoming so potential among men. There was a time when everything was supposed to proceed immediately from the will of God. According to the notions which prevailed then, grass grew because, as it were, his will pried up every particular stem. Every drop of water out of heaven came down because he threw it. To the imagination of the Hebrew, every blast of lightning was the flash of his eye, and every bolt of thunder was the sound of his voice. There was a general impression that whatever was done by law, as we now say, was done by the immediate volition of God.

We have gone step by step onward until now we see that God governs by natural law. I will not say that he never governs by the direct impulse of his own will; but the great government of affairs in this world is by natural law. And we are leaning to the other extreme. And though we are not in terms dispossessing God of any place in his own universe, yet we are substantially taking the ground that whatever is done is done by the force of natural laws, as if natural laws were themselves reticulated, universal Godhead; as though physical force were all the force there is, or all that is comprehensible.

It becomes desirable, therefore, that men—and none so much as those who believe in the evolutions of science and higher knowledge—should recognize that above, and behind, and beyond all the laws which we can trace, is a universal Being whose nature is so vast, and whose realm is so subtle, that he is beyond the interpretation of

the senses, and that we cannot rise to behold him or measure him by any of those tests by which we behold and measure lower and less truths.

We need, also, looking upon the long course of time, upon the procession of events which have transpired, upon that which we call *the historic movements of the race*, and which devout men call *the providential history of the government of God in the world*, to maintain continuously, high above all tampering of doubt, the fact that God has been in the affairs of this world, and not simply human volition. Men have not been mere wheels in a machine; they have been full of power, and by their compliance or non-compliance they have had, and will have, much to do with the determination of events. But there is one thing that we should insist upon—namely, that while natural law has had its part, and while human volition has had its part, in the scheme by which the affairs of this world are governed, above all other influences there has been a guiding Thought and a guiding Power.

If I look upon a power-loom, and see the hundred threads that stand upon their quill wheels, carrying the separate colors which enter into the fabric coming out on the other side, I say, perhaps, "That carpet, of such a beautiful pattern, with scores of colors, and all conceivable figures, is the result of the action of natural laws. It was from the alembic that you got your colors, and it was from the sheep that you got your wool. That is the secret of the fabric. It is all easy of interpretation." "But the machinery," you say. "O yes," I say; "that machinery is a natural product. The iron is from nature. The formation of the wheels is a reproduction of certain things that are in nature. They have been put together so that by force and gravitation they work out given results. You have your material factors and your causation; and the combined operation of these is all that there is in this power-loom which is constantly weaving and unrolling carpets of such beautiful patterns."

Now, who ever stumbled over a power-loom that grew? Who ever found a sheep that spun its own wool? There was one intelligence that sheared the sheep; there was another intelligence that spun the thread; there were other intelligences that studied and invented the dye; there were other intelligences that put the thread into the vat, and stained it through and through with color; and there were other intelligences that wove the fabric. There were multitudes of intelligences, running through ages, that perfected the weaving art. This extraordinary power-loom stands as the result of long-continued investigation. There are five hundred sep-

arate lines of thought, the ripening of which has required hundreds and thousands of years ; and at last they all come together, and produce that fabric, under the direction of the master of the factory. The pattern was in his head before it went down on those pasteboards ; and every one of them has relation to what the machine shall do. As you stand and look at the power-loom, it seems almost as though you might carry on a conversation with it.

I stood in Lowell and saw the power-loom work, and I said, "This thing ought to vote !" There were about it so many indications of intelligence, so many evidences of high and living thought, that I felt almost rebuked. I could not follow all its motions—or motives, if I may so say. I marveled that it should know how to put every thread into its proper place, and every color in its right spot, and every figure so that it should come out right. But all this intelligence came from two quiet, thinking men—the pattern-maker and the manager—who were back in the office, and not seen. Out comes the carpet steadily, day and night, and all through the year, and it is thrown into the market. And think of a man's standing by, and saying, "I see the reason of these things. Here is their origin. Talk to me about their being the result of creative intelligence ! They are the result of creative machinery."

So men look on all the course of nature, and its ten thousand influences. They trace this up to one natural law, and that up to another natural law, through ages. Climatic forces—light, heat, moisture—marine or mountain influences, have had their effect on men. And men have been giving forth a little here and a little there of their own motive power. As a result, out has come the great fabric of history, unfolding and flowing down to us. And we look back and say, "If it had not been for Alexander, that would not have been ; if it had not been for Cæsar, that would not have had an existence. It was such a thinker that did this, and it was such a thinker that did that." Men trace the products of the world's history to primary causes ; and they say, "What is the need of a God ?" They say, "We see where these things come from : they come gradually from human thought and development." Multitudes of men fall upon the theory that the universal race is God. In other words, *God*, to them, is only a name that sets forth the substance of universal thought and universal finding-out.

Now, you might just as well say, because you do not see the pattern-maker and the manager of the power-loom, that all it does it does by its own nature, and that there is no guiding intelligence behind it, as to look upon that greater mystery, with myriads of factors and innumerable colors, and see that from the earliest historic

period it has held steadily one great upward course, amidst crimes, and vast brutal outbreaks, and interruptions, and say that there has not been an underlying thought or plan. Men and things have not made themselves, or marked out their course. While they have been evolving a nature of their own, it has been in subordination to some far-off power ; and that we call God.

As we are in danger of losing our God by an over-addiction to natural law, or to causation, so we are in danger of losing him by prevailing systems of social life, and by great civic courses in the affairs of men. And that which is true in respect to people at large is also true in respect to our own personal selves. The consciousness of purity, the feeling of pride, the development of a victorious feeling, and of a cultivated understanding—all these tend toward unconscious atheism. There is many and many a man who is a blank atheist, though he holds formally to the existence of a God. He feels sufficient for himself. He is surrounded by those circumstances and conditions which are required for his prosperity, and although he technically and orthodoxly believes that there is a God, he does not see any use for one. He does not perceive that he touches *him* anywhere. He does not feel the need of him.

Every man, however, needs the sense of a present God ; because there is no man that lives who does not need to be drilled, disciplined, and broken into something higher and nobler and better than he is by nature. It is necessary as an inspiration to those who are endowed slenderly, and as a restraint to those who are endowed largely. Every one is apt to feel that he is well endowed ; for every man has such self-confidence, such an intense sense of selfness and resolute power, that almost nobody feels, or is willing to feel, that he needs just that discipline which we give to flax or hemp. These, in their natural state, are unfit for use. Who could take flax in the stalk and make a garment of it ? It has much in it that is good, and more that is useless ; and it is not until it has been dew-rotted, and has gone through the brake, and all the woody matter has been hatched out of it, not until it is bleached and combed and carded, and made into thread, that it can be used for making a garment. It is its last state that makes it useful, and not its natural state. Almost every one of our faculties needs to go through a period of growing and a period of discipline, so that it shall be broken in. Many to a great extent discordant aptitudes should be so wrought together by some supreme overruling power, that the whole human mind should work together and in right lines. For man, rightly described, is an angel riding on a monkey and a bear. We have both the foolish, fantastic elements which are represented

by the monkey ; we also have that hard, gross, brutal nature, which is represented by the bear ; and, superincumbent on these are aspirations and inspirations—angelic tendencies. And how shall all these elements be associated together ? how shall they be so recombined that the whole power of man shall work towards the angelic, the lower impulses giving tone and power to the higher and nobler ?

It is by this grand discipline of life, it is by the infinite snubbings of experience, that men have their pride brought down to its proper proportion and proper place. Pride, like red in a picture, would be glad to flare out in great preponderance over everything else ; and it is the necessity of every man among men to be beat back and beat down, in order to make his pride keep its subordinate place. Men are, like animals, greedy, selfish ; and they need to be taught, as they are by ten thousand providences, that they must look upon the things of others as well as upon their own things. They need to be taught, in other words, beneficence. The whole nature of man needs to be wrought over again and wrought together. It needs, by discipline and trial, to be made to work toward high intellectual and moral ends.

For this, where is there anything of equal potency with the recognition and consciousness, “Thou, God, seest me” ? The father helps ; the mother helps ; the neighbor, the school, the farm, the ship, public sentiment, civic economy,—all things are helping ; but so far as the individual man becomes co-operative and inspired with a sense of the true direction of things it must come from a consciousness of the presence, the reality, and the glory of an overhanging invisible Power.

In the discouragements of life, too, we need a consciousness of the presence of God. We go out in the morning princes, and we sneak back home again at night slaves. We go out feeling, “What is there that I cannot do ?” and we come back feeling, “What is there that I can do ?” We go out swelling and tumultuous with a sense of our thought-power, of our organizing power ; and we come back feeling that all we have done has been to mix clay and mud, and that the first footfall has destroyed everything that we built up. There is this constant collision between a man’s over-estimating himself in buoyant moods, and his under-estimating himself in gloomy moods. There is this everlasting difference all the way through life, between the ideal and the real ; between the conceptional and the practical ; between the sowing and the reaping. There is this perpetual discrepancy between that which men see, and that which they get and do. And where can a man find,

under such circumstances, support and patience in the acquiescence with dull necessity, except in the faith, "God is causing all things to work together for good to them that love him. God is dealing with me, and I feel his inspiration. In the midst of my endeavors I feel my own weakness ; but though I am apparently beaten down, abandoned, forsaken, still there is in the nature of God strength and restoration—so that all things, after all, shall work together for good to me." In the thousand despondencies of life, in its over-matched conflicts, in its defeats, in its reactionary periods, in its nights of gloom, in all those experiences which come with infirm and conscious sinfulness there rises up—or may rise up—before every soul, a sense of an over-ruling Providence, an ever-guiding Influence, that shall make up in man for all his deficiencies and mistakes.

We need it, likewise, as a grand counterpoise to the influence of men with their fellow-men. Although the influence of man with man is designed to be, and is, in the main, a moral benefit, yet what weakness and restraint come from its perversion ! The interest which we feel in men ; the bias which is produced by sympathy and affection on the one side, and the influence which is produced by the consciousness of men's superiority and power over us on the other side ; the looking up and out, sidewise and down, toward our fellow-men,—these are things from which come temptations in human life.

We need, therefore, a great balance-wheel. We need a central influence that is higher and nobler than men, and that comes nearer to us than men do.

Who is there of us that does not have occasion every year, every month, every week of his life, to say, "I thank God that there is a better understanding in heaven than here" ? How many men do wrong, and are praised as if they were right-doers, and are ashamed, and feel humbled in themselves, at the consciousness of men's misjudgments ! How many more men attempt to do right, and suffer in the attempt through the misconstruction of their motives, and appeal in their silent thoughts from the great unknowing world to the great knowing God !

While we are not to set ourselves apart from men, while we are to take our lot, and dwell in sympathy with our fellows, we need something that is higher than mankind—a counsellor—a present help—an all-seeing God—that shall make us able to stand whatever may be the currents that flow around about us ; to be independent in our judgments ; to be continuous in principle and purpose, though men deride ; to abide by that which in our sight and conscience before God is right and proper. Men need to be held stead-

fast under all the influences that beat in upon them from their social connections. And this is the effect of the sense of an ever-present God.

Then everybody needs to have his ideal life kept bright. We are not apt to run to ideals. Youth is generous and ardent toward right ; but not far along in life men find the switch turned ; and whereas they meant to do all things right, they find themselves running with immense power in the direction of selfishness ; and by and by, after some rebuffs and troubles, they say, " I suppose it must be so ; one must not expect too much "—and then give up.

Other men find themselves running along the line of ambition ; and though at first they reluctant, and make some feeble resistance, at length they say, " I cannot get out of it ; I must take things as they are ; in Rome I must be as a Roman "—and then submit to temptation.

Other men take a certain line which they suppose to be right, and meet disaster, and are discomfited, and say, " This comes of attempting to follow an ideal. If I had taken things as I found them, without attempting to make a pattern of myself, and had followed the paths that custom had marked out, I should have got along well enough."

There is a constant temptation brought to bear upon men to lower their ideal of life, and to say, " Large manhood you cannot have. You can only do so much in this world. That you had better do, and let the rest alone."

We need, therefore, to have always before our minds the thought of One who is pure, and true and just ; of One who suffers that others may not suffer ; of One who gives up everything that others may have everything ; of One who empties himself of glory and delight in order that men may be filled with delight and glorious victory by and by. We need that there should be shining down upon us something more heroic than heroes, something more noble than the noblest men. We need the shining upon us of an invisible God, who shall hold us up to our ideals.

Lastly, in our hours of solitude and weakness and decay, and especially in the last footsteps which we print upon the soil, when we go down into the valley and shadow of death, we need that there shall rise up above us and beyond us that which shall lead us to say, " I fear no evil. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

My friends, we shall go hence, every one of us. Whatever uncertainties there may be, there is no uncertainty in this : that youth is running toward age, and age toward old age ; and that old age, full of weakness and infirmity, will be overtaken by the swinging of

the scythe. Though mid-life may escape, the course of life is toward weakness. Immortality does not live here. All strength and power in men is at last overcome. Whatever may be your condition, and whatever may be your wish, one thing is certain : that there draws near to you the time when you must fold the wing, and lay down the strong truncheon, and yield up the spirit. And in that hour when the more we are loved the more helpless is love ; in that hour when the richer we are the less able are riches to do anything ; in that hour when the more there is about us the less is it flavorsome and desirable ; in that hour when heart and flesh fail—we need the comfort of believing, with all our heart and mind and soul, that universal intelligence and universal love preside ; that we are leaning on the arm of a God who is never weary ; that we are guided by an Eye that never sleeps ; that we are safe, and saved by a Heart that never ceases to beat with sympathy and love.

Through all the struggles of life, then, here is this resort ; here is this medicine ; here is your food ; here is your light ; here is your aspiration ; here is that which shall sustain you while living, comfort you while dying, and bless you with immortality in the life that is to come !

So may it be said of every one of us, when we have passed and gone :

“He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice in thy goodness. We rejoice in that glory which we have beheld reflected in nature, and in the manifestation which thou hast in Jesus Christ our Lord, and all the knowledge of thee which we have had revealed through the experience of thy people from age to age. Thou art a God that loveth righteousness. Thou dost not desire that thy creatures shall be remote, and feeble, and as the beasts of the earth. Thou art bringing them up by all thy providences, and by all the laws of thine administration, that they may be worthily called sons of God. We are growing toward the height of this honor. We are inspired by thee with sentiments that break forth more and more toward truth, and integrity, and love, and purity, and fidelity, and reverence, and godliness in fear and in love; and we thank thee for this ministration of thy Spirit. In the great invisible realm of things where thou dwellest, thou art sending down upon all men the divine influence. Thou art quickening that which is good, and restraining that which is evil; and we thank thee for thy providential administration, and for those grand ends therein which thou hast revealed, and for all the hope which we have for future days. Not by our wisdom, not by our pride, not by our skill, has the world been guided in its upward development and growth. Thou art drawing out by thy mind and by thy will, and art refashioning the forms of men, and giving better, and higher, and nobler developments to mankind. We rejoice to believe that there is to be a day, by-and-by, when men shall be regenerated, and when the race shall stand with unexampled purity, and beauty, and happiness, and when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth in which shall dwell righteousness. Although now we are far from it, though we are as men who walk at midnight, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, and the space from midnight toward morning is filled with signs and tokens of growing promise; and we rejoice to believe that the day-star shall dawn, and that when it passes it shall be by the radiance of the brighter sun which shall lead on the golden hours. And yet, there shall be all round the world no requiem, no sigh, no groan, no travailing in pain and anguish; but joy shall spring up and meet joy, and the choral song shall be of praise to Him that has loved and redeemed the world. For that consummation which we desire with unutterable longings, we would give life and strength, and all that we have. And we beseech of thee that every one of us may make an offering, first, of his own soul. May we dwell nearer to thee, and be endued with thy Spirit, and partake of something of God in Christ Jesus, and learn the royal lesson of suffering, of self-renunciation, of trust, of hope, of purifying love, and of fidelity to God. And we pray that thy kingdom may be in us and in others, until one and another, and multitudes uniting together, shall begin this blessed result.

We pray for thy blessing to rest, to-night, upon those that speak and those that hear; upon all that have part in the ministry of song, of instruction, and of fellowship. And wilt thou comfort any that are cast down? Wilt thou strengthen any that are weak? Wilt thou confirm any that are wavering? Send light, we beseech of thee, to any that are in doubt. We pray that thou wilt grant strength to every one, so that as his day is his strength may be also. We pray that thou wilt grant that those who are discouraged—those who have been striving to walk in the right way, but who seem to themselves to be overborne by circumstances on the right and on the left, may look up to God, who is mightier than all other things. And if they cannot live in their own strength, may they learn to live in the strength of Almighty God.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon those who

are not thine—who do not recognize thy law, thy service, nor thy spirit. Turn them away from their darkness. Turn them back from their disobedience. Turn them with hearty repentance for sin, with reformation of life, with holy consecration, and with beginning affection toward God, that they may have the blessedness of his presence, and that they may inherit the promises. Are there not many who have aforetime walked in the ways of faith, and have forgotten them and gone aside? Wilt thou not touch their souls, and awaken again those feelings which have long been slumbering or are extinct?

We beseech of thee that thou wilt revive thy work in this church and in the churches about us, and make thy Word more and more powerful in the slaying of enmity, and in the building up of true Christian life.

Let thy kingdom come in all the nations of the earth. Send abroad the light and power of the Gospel everywhere. May those that preach feel that the Lord is with them. May they be endued with patience and wisdom. And accept, at last, the fruit of their labor.

Hear us in these our petitions, and answer for thy great mercy's sake. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praises everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Grant thy blessing, our Father, to rest upon the word that has been spoken. Kindle in every heart a desire to know thee, not by the outward eye, nor by the physical sense, but by inward inspiration. Shine into every heart. Manifest thyself to us as thou dost not to the world. We ask not that there should be a voice; we ask not for a form; we ask not for any such communication between thee and ourselves as there is between man and man. But as we know the summer, high in the air, or deep in the earth, by all the things that it produces, and are able to say, "Behold the summer is with us!" so may there be that in our universal sense which shall show that the air and the courses thereof, and time, and all its outlets and inlets, are filled with the Divine presence. May we rejoice in thee, knowing that we do not half understand thee; knowing that we only approach the verge and edge of thy being; knowing that our experience in life, of truth, and patience, and disinterestedness, are adulterated and fragmentary, as particles of gold which the stream bears down; knowing that we have but an outermost and remote conception of that great Orb of being whom we shall yet see, when we are raised to spiritual existence. May we rejoice; for though we know so little, may we have confidence to believe that that which is true is immeasurably more true than the heart of men can conceive. More glorious art thou in holiness than we can understand. We do not know what is the meaning of the word in its amplitude, and beauty, and majesty, when we call thee holy. We do not know what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and wonder-working power of that love which carries summer through the heavens perpetually; of that love which moves with mighty force through the inchoate creation; of that love which is giving breath to infinite existences, running through the eternities, waiting and nourishing all things; of that love which we see waking in feeble bosoms; of that love which, like a mighty atmosphere, moves through the universal realm, and by which all things, at last, shall be

fashioned to the honor and glory of God, and to the welfare of his creatures. Though we yet stand afar off and gaze, blessed be thy name that our imperfect knowledge works gladness, because we are comforted in that which we can grasp and comprehend. It is mere and better—unspeakably better—than the heart of man hath ever conceived. More glorious is it than we can comprehend.

And now, we beseech of thee that thou wilt abide with us. While we struggle upward, wilt thou meet us? Thou dost. No water can rise, winged, in the air, and move invisible, or bank itself in clouds, but by the help of the sun shining on it; and so wilt thou give us thine aid, and lift us into ethereal thought and power. And when thou hast served thyself by us, and shaped us, and developed us, so that we shall be fit for transplanting, bring us into that better soil, that higher realm, those nobler conditions, where we shall go forth and know as we are known, and see thee as thou art, and be satisfied with thy likeness.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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